

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 271

THE NATION
25 June 1977

EDITORIALS

The CIA's Apprentices

The rustling behind the curtain of the American "intelligence community" suggests that an intense bureaucratic struggle is going on back there for control of the \$6 billion monster. Admiral Stansfield Turner, the new Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has begun a fight to put the whole works under his thumb. It would mean, if he won the engagement, that Turner would rule even the enormous roost called the Defense Intelligence Agency whose spies in the skies and on the ground and under the seas are said to be able to listen to every word spoken on this planet. There is predictable resistance to this attempted grab, of course, on the ground that there is safety in numbers (of spy outfits) and that the horrendous mistakes of one can be corrected by the countervailing errors of another.

Bureaucratic power struggles often have their strongly comic aspects, as the participants hand-wrestle each other in ways that sometimes lack dignity, but this one is no joke. Something like the national sanity is at stake, not to say what the founders called "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind." The CIA has proven itself a dangerously irresponsible organization, and the idea that our government's knowledge of the world and its various dangers should come entirely from this one body is unthinkable, even as it is solemnly considered.

Admiral Turner has made his reach for intelligence power at a peculiarly inauspicious time. Lately there has been a veritable shower of light (and dirt) on the agency. Even the clumsy Russians know how to exploit its worldwide disrepute. President Carter was forced, at his June 13th press conference, to deny, after he had "inquired deeply within the State Department and within the CIA," that the Soviet dissident Anatoly Shcharansky, arrested for treason, had ever "to our knowledge" had any connection with the CIA.

The phrase "to our knowledge" tells it all. The evident and abundantly proven truth is that Presidents have as often been ignorant of the dark operational side of the CIA as they have been aware of it. Sometimes their ignorance has been deliberate, in the interest of that magisterial form of lying known as "deniability"—"get rid of X but don't tell me how." At other times the CIA has decided on its own to do its deeds without the knowledge of the President. The word for that is "rogue," meaning that the agency is stampeding out of control. We are now supposed to believe that the rampant elephant of intelligence is back in harness, obedient to supervisory boards and to the "oversight" of more vigilant Congressional committees. It would be wise not to make that tranquilizing assertion on faith.

In three areas of the world—Cuba, Chile and Korea—the harmful effects of the CIA's work have lately been exposed, and we propose to examine the facts of these operations along with their domestic consequences. First:

The Cuban Connection

of Fidel Castro. That attitude has reigned in Washington at least since the successful Cuban revolutionary made his first visit to this country in 1959 and spent two hours talking to Eisenhower's Vice President, Richard M. Nixon (who then recommended to his chief a policy of all-out opposition to Castro). What has not been so evident is the obsessive nature of that hostility and the extraordinary means this country has employed to "get rid of" Castro. The Cuban leader now tells people that he was always a Communist, even before he led his little band up into the Sierra Maestra. It seems more likely that, in the beginning, he was another kind of radical or Marxist and that he now claims this original virtue because of the way he has since been forced to go—specifically because of his million-dollar-a-day dependence on the Soviet Union for everything—that the American trade embargo has denied his island state.

All of this, and much more, was pulled together in a remarkable television documentary, *The CIA's Secret Army*, broadcast by CBS News on June 10. Much of the information in this program, with Bill Moyers as the correspondent, was known to students of the quite awful story, but television concentrated and focused its impact. The broadcast was notable for the strong conclusions it forced upon the viewer.

The main judgment from it must be that the effort to topple Castro (and replace him with what?) left this country with a secret army of embittered Cuban exiles, organized and trained by the CIA, and now looking for ways to practice the terrorism it had taught them. In the new climate that President Carter is sensibly trying to create with Cuba, one that seems to be leading toward normal relations, these angry and violent men will become even more extreme in their attitudes and actions, and their targets will change. They will turn inward toward the country that has been their frustrating refuge. At the same time, the whole hemisphere will become the ground for their violent games and it will be almost impossible to check them in their mad, anti-Communist career.

For this terrible effect of those years of "get Castro" we have mainly the Kennedys, John and Robert, to thank. Moyers builds a compelling case for the conclusion that the real CIA war against Castro began *after and as a result of* the failure of the Bay of Pigs. President Kennedy lacked the courage to cancel that operation (having inherited this half-grown aberration from Eisenhower) or to carry it out with full vigor, to use one of his favorite words.

Castro believed, and with good reason, as the Moyers broadcast documents, that Kennedy was determined to bring him down by whatever dreadful means, including the use of gangsters and every refinement of the assassin's art. Hence the installation of the Russian missiles—to protect Cuba against the invasion that to Castro seemed inevitable. That famous "finest hour" widely attributed to Kennedy's facing down of Khrushchev over the removal of the missiles (and poisoning the world on the nuclear brink) was thus the result of Kennedy's own bungled attempts, through the CIA, to eliminate Fidel